THE JESSIE AND WILLIAM ADAMS HOUSE

9326 South Pleasant Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Preliminary Staff Summary of Information
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9326 South Pleasant Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Built: 1900-01
Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright

The Jessie and William Adams House is one of a small number of residences in the city of Chicago by Frank Lloyd Wright. Designed in 1900 and built early the following year, this house represents an important period of experimentation in the architect's career, extending from roughly 1893 through 1910, during which Wright laid the theoretical basis for the formation of the Prairie School. In addition to its interest relative to its design and its architect, this structure is unique in that its original owner was a contractor who had previously built a number of residences from designs by Wright. As such, the Jessie and William Adams House represents a singular statement of the relationship between the architect and one of his builders.

William Adams, Contractor and Builder

The original owner of the house at 9326 South Pleasant Avenue, and the person who commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design it, was William Adams. Born in Dairy, County Ayrshire, Scotland, on February 3, 1861, Adams received his elementary education in his native town before emigrating to the United States in the late 1870s, settling with his family in Florida. Trained in the building trades, by 1884 he was living in Chicago and working as an independent contractor. Adams was listed as a carpenter in city directories from 1884 to 1894, and for most of those years he shared a residence on Ashland Avenue with his brother James, a bricklayer.

Early in 1895 Adams started a new firm in partnership with his brother under the name of the William Adams Company, contractors and builders, and that October he was married to Jessie Mae Browning of Tampa, Florida. Although William lent his name to the firm, his

brother James served as president from 1895 through 1902, with William holding the title of company secretary. When James Adams left the partnership and Chicago in 1902, William took over as company president and directed the fortunes of the firm through at least 1928. By 1933 Adams had retired and, although he spent much of his time at his retirement home in Sarasota, Florida, he continued to use the house at 9326 South Pleasant Avenue in Chicago as his primary residence until his death on July 20, 1939. Adams' wife Jessie continued to occupy their residence until her death in March of 1941.

During the first fifteen years he was in business under his own name, William Adams built a wide range of structures for some of the most prominent architects in Chicago. Among these are a number of residences that have since been designated Chicago Landmarks, including the E.G. Chase House at 4851 South Kenwood Avenue, designed by George C. Nimmons in 1898, the James Douglass House at 4830 South Woodlawn Avenue, and the Henry Veeder House at 4900 South Greenwood Avenue, which were designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw and were built in 1907, all included in the Kenwood District, designated in 1979; and the Louis Wolff, Jr. House at 4234 North Hazel Avenue, designed by Hugh Garden and William Drummond for the office of Richard E. Schmidt in 1903, and which is located in the Hutchinson Street District, designated in 1977.

In addition to residential buildings, the William Adams Company constructed commercial buildings for a variety of uses and in diverse styles and sizes, including steel frame structures intended for use as retail stores and factories. The largest of these structures is exemplified by the Lakeside Press Building at 727 through 737 South Plymouth Court. Designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw for the R.R. Donnelly & Sons publishing company, this seven-story printing plant was built in 1901 and recommended for designation as a Chicago Landmark in 1991 as part of the proposed Printing House Row District. Another commercial structure constructed by the Adams Company was the Chapin & Gore Building, 63 East Adams Street, an eight-story retail, office and warehouse facility commissioned by a liquor distributor. The Chapin & Gore Building was designed and erected in 1904 from plans drawn by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh Garden, and represents a significant statement of the Chicago School. The Chapin & Gore Building was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1982.

This abbreviated list of buildings constructed by the William Adams Company is nonetheless an impressive one. Although it only includes those buildings that survive and are designated landmarks or recommended for designation at the time of this writing, it is exceptionally diverse in terms of the variety of designs, uses, styles, and in the number of architects with whom Adams collaborated. From the stylistically conservative work of Howard Van Doren Shaw to the contemporary *avant-garde* represented by the designs of Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh Garden, Adams had become one of the contractors who was entrusted with realizing a number of the most significant commercial and residential designs built in Chicago at the turn of the century.

The Louis Wolff, Jr. House at 4234 North Hazel Street is located in the Hutchinson Street District which was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1977. Designed by William Drummond and Hugh Garden for the office of Richard E. Schmidt, this house was constructed in 1903 by the William Adams Company. *(Photograph by Barbara Crane for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks)*

Frank Lloyd Wright and Residential Design, 1887-1910

Frank Lloyd Wright was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, in 1867 and received limited formal schooling, being largely educated at home. In spite of never receiving a high school diploma he was admitted to the University of Wisconsin in 1886, where he spent one year studying what was then called the scientific curriculum. Skilled and avid in drawing, Wright left the university and arrived in Chicago in 1887, where he took a position as a draftsman in the office of architect J.L. Silsbee. Wright had likely met the architect through his uncle, a minister who had commissioned Silsbee to design two new Unitarian churches, one for Wright's family in Helena, Wisconsin, and the other for his uncle's congregation on the South Side of Chicago.

Silsbee was noted for his picturesque residences in the Queen Anne style, and designed a number of houses for prominent clients in the city and suburbs. Although he had respect for Silsbee's talent, Wright felt that it was wasted; he became disillusioned with what he saw as a design system that was overly ornate and intellectually vacuous, which moved him to leave Silsbee the next year to join the firm of Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan. During his five years with this office Wright came under the influence of the philosophy of Louis Sullivan, the most forceful proponent of an architectural theory that would clearly express the qualities of a building as related to its site, structure, and function. Sullivan, who became confident of Wright's abilities, gave him responsibility for directing many of the firm's residential projects, most notably the James Charnley House. Located at 1365 North Astor Street and built in 1891, the cubic massing and relative simplicity of its plan and detail made the Charnley House a singularly outstanding architectural statement at the time it was built. In recognition of its seminal importance to the future of residential design, the Charnley House was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1972.

His experiences with Silsbee and Sullivan formed the basis for Wright's career as a residential designer, wherein he questioned and reinterpreted the single family residence in its plan, spatial relationships, and stylistic expression. Following the example of Silsbee, early in his career Wright concentrated most of his energy on solving the problems posed by residential designs. Following Sullivan's line of thinking, however, Wright turned his back on traditional solutions, seeking to reinvent the domestic environment by breaking out of the constraints of compartmentalized, box-like plans, preferring to strive for a more organic, integrated relationship between space and mass.

When Sullivan caught Wright designing houses independently and in violation of his contract in 1893, Wright was forced to leave Adler & Sullivan and started an office of his own. Although separated from the person he continued to call his "Master," Wright used the knowledge he had gained from Sullivan and built upon it, incorporating ideas and forms from other sources, in particular from Japanese design. As his career progressed during the 1890s,

Wright put ever greater emphasis on the interdependent relationship between the building and its site, on the open interior plan and its interconnected relationship with the natural surroundings of the building, on the intrinsic qualities of building materials in their natural state, and on the expressive qualities of unadorned craftsmanship. With a firm conviction that the course of residential design had to be changed to meet the needs of the particular time, place, and circumstance for which it was created, Wright's experiments became essential elements in the contemporary debate over architectural theory and practice and led to the innovative work of Midwestern architects during the first decade of the twentieth century that became known as the Prairie School.

Collaborations between William Adams and Frank Lloyd Wright

It has not been possible to verify when Frank Lloyd Wright and William Adams first became acquainted, although it is likely that they met sometime before they set up their respective independent practices or immediately thereafter. One other contractor who would be responsible for the realization of many of Wright's designs, Paul F.P. Mueller, also became known to the architect during this period. Wright and Mueller met when Wright joined the office of Adler & Sullivan in 1888. Mueller, who was an engineering draftsman for Adler & Sullivan during the late 1880s and early '90s, eventually founded his own contracting firm. In addition to constructing a number of Wright's suburban houses, in Chicago Mueller built his E-Z Polish Factory of 1905 and the Midway Gardens of 1913-14. Mueller was also the contractor and engineer for one of Wright's projects in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and for the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, built during the years 1921 through 1923.

Comparable to his work with Mueller, the professional relationship Wright had with William Adams extended over a number of years and a series of projects. Adams may have become known to Wright and the other architects of the Chicago School, including Schmidt and Garden, from a collaboration on a project for Adler & Sullivan sometime around 1890, when Adams would have been employed as a subcontractor. Regardless of the exact timing of their first meeting, Adams and Wright were in contact with one another by 1895, when Adams had started his own company and Wright had begun work on the design for a stable for William H. Winslow in River Forest, Illinois.

The William H. Winslow House was one of the first independent commissions Wright received after leaving the office of Adler & Sullivan. While the house was planned in 1893 and completed the next year, the stable that was built for the same client on the same property was not erected until late 1895 or early 1896. The stable is symmetrical in plan and elevation, being U-shaped in plan and having wings of one story in height that flank a central element of two stories. Like the neighboring house, the Winslow Stable has a very tall first floor of

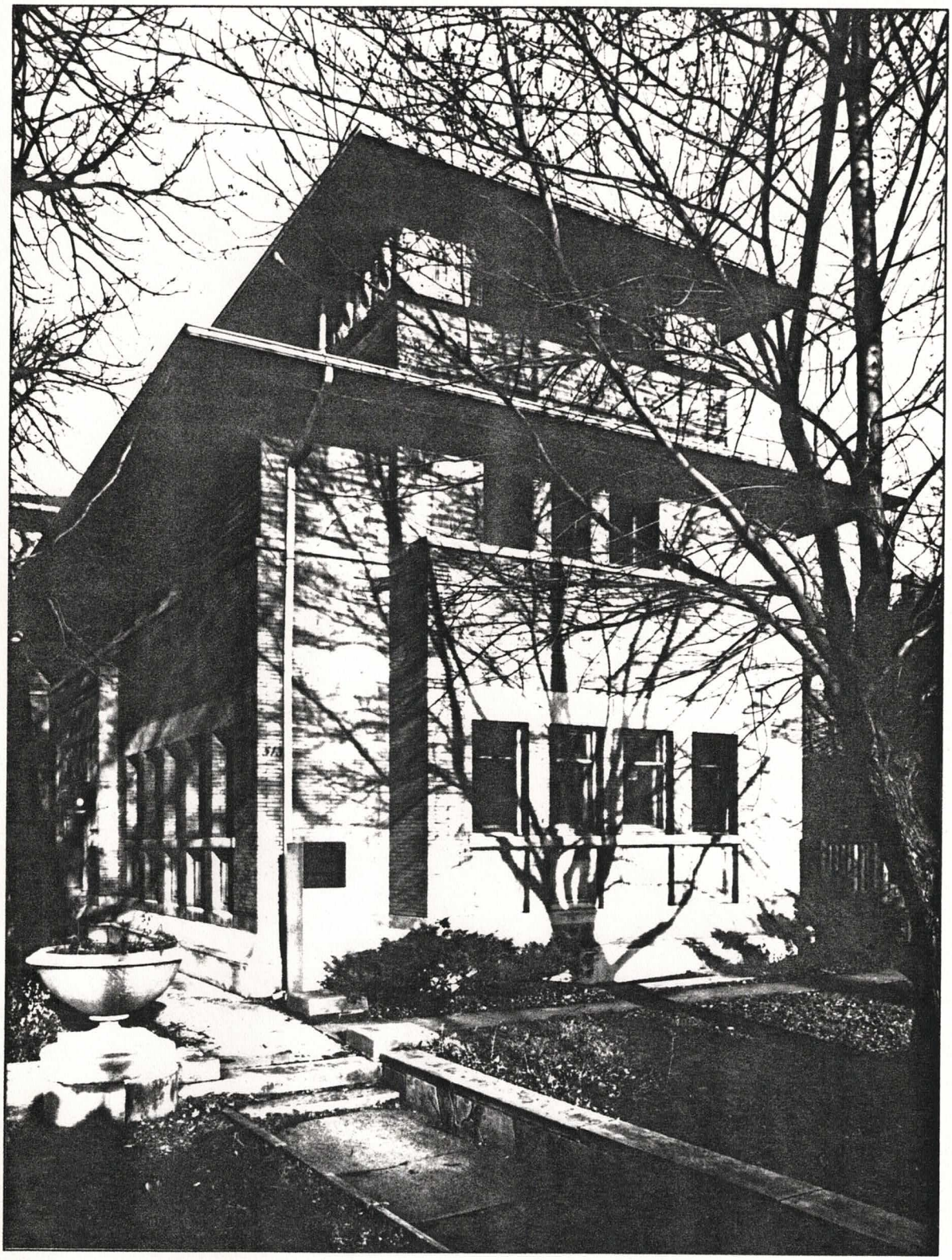
Roman brick, a short frame second floor faced with stucco, widely overhanging eaves, and hip roofs that were originally surfaced in tile. The proportional relationships within this design are balanced in that the wings, which stand only as tall as the brick wall of the central mass, echo the percentages of brick and stucco found in the walls of the taller section.

Working drawings of the Winslow Stable in the collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, reproduced in plates 22 through 24 of Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer's *Frank Lloyd Wright Monograph, Volume 9, Preliminary Studies 1889-1916*, include the signature of William Adams. The signature of a contractor on working drawings, along with the signature of the client, was a common practice which served to confirm that the parties involved had all agreed that the building would be built as illustrated. This meant that the client had accepted the design, and that the bid tendered by the contractor and accepted by the parties involved had specified the project as described, including materials, labor, and other costs. Adams' signature on the drawings serves to confirm his work as the contractor for this structure.

Adams' next documented collaboration with Wright occurred with the realization of a house for Isadore H. Heller at 5132 South Woodlawn Avenue in Chicago. Built in 1897, the Heller House is a three-story with basement, rectangular-plan structure constructed of Roman brick trimmed in limestone. The exterior of the Heller House has a horizontal emphasis which is conveyed overall and in detail through its volumetric rectangular massing, its Roman brick with raked horizontal mortar joints, its hip roofs, and its widely overhanging eaves, all elements that Wright experimented with in his early work and that would come to characterize his later designs. Curiously, given Adams' previous work for Wright on the Winslow Stable, the stable on the original plans for the Heller House was apparently never built. Noted as an important step in the evolution of the architect's theoretical development and stylistic expression, the Isadore H. Heller House was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1971.

The Joseph Husser House, which formerly stood at 730 West Buena Avenue in Chicago, was the next structure on which documentation confirms that Adams worked with Wright. Built in 1899 on the lakefront in Uptown and erected at an estimated cost of $18,000, the Husser House was the largest and most expensive residence Wright had completed up to that time. A three-story structure, it had no basement below ground, having instead a ground level basement for mechanical systems and the main living spaces on the second story, allowing for dramatic views overlooking the lake. The Husser House was one of the first of Wright's designs to break out of a basic rectangular form. The rooms were here transformed into interior spaces that flowed without the interruption of unnecessary partitions, extending beyond the limits of the rectangle in plan and elevation. Another building that demonstrated an important link in the development of Prairie School design, the Husser House was demolished in 1926.

An elevation drawing of the Joseph Husser House in the collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, reproduced as plate 254 of Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer's *Frank Lloyd Wright*



The Isadore H. Heller House at 5132 South Woodlawn Avenue in Chicago. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built by the William Adams Company in 1897, the Heller House was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1971. The first floor windows on the facade of this structure are double-hung sash. *(Photograph by Bob Thall for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks.)*

Monograph, Volume 1, 1887-1901, includes very specific instructions that define details of the project as done by the contractor, who in this case was the William Adams Company:

> Exterior walls faced with dry yellow Roman bricks. Horizontal joints wide and raked out to emphasize horizontal grain. Vertical joints stopped flush with mortar the color of the bricks. Stone trimmings. Terra cotta capitals. Frieze in stucco relief. Soffits plain in plaster. Roof covering of light red flat tiles without modeled trimmings. Hips and ridges clean.

The importance Wright placed on details that other architects might have found trivial, such as the difference between the ways in which horizontal and vertical mortar joints should be articulated and colored, would have required the utmost diligence on the part of the contractor. Finished work that did not conform to such instructions or that was found wanting in execution would have had a serious and detrimental impact on the completed design. In the case of the mortar joints, inadequate workmanship would have compromised the horizontal emphasis of Wright's design.

Wright mentioned in his autobiography that, due to his reputation, many contractors and materials suppliers would not even look at the blueprints once they saw his signature. In *Frank Lloyd Wright, An Autobiography*, the architect noted that:

> After the Winslow House was built in 1893 and Mr. Moore did not want a house so "different" that he would have to go down the back way to his morning train to avoid being laughed at, our bulkheads of caution blindly serving Yesterday - our bankers - at first refused to loan money on the "new" houses. Friends had to be found to finance the early buildings. When the plans were presented for estimates, soon, mill-men would look for the name on them, read the name, roll the drawings up again and hand them back to the contractor with the remark that they "were not hunting for trouble."

The difficulty Wright had finding contractors and suppliers for his projects was due in part to designs that were so different from anything else then proposed, in part to his exacting standards and his eye for detail and, of great importance to contractor and client alike, due to his predilection for underestimating the ultimate cost of a given project. Wright's further comments also indicate that not many contractors, having once worked on a building he designed, made themselves available for the privilege a second time:

> Contractors, of course, more often failed to read the plans correctly than not. The plans were necessarily radically different simply because so much nonsense had to be left off the building. Numbers of small men went broke trying to carry out their contracts. This made trouble. Fools would come walking in

> where angels were afraid to tread. We seemed to have the worst of the contracting element in Oak Park to deal with.

The fact that Adams constructed the Winslow Stable and at least three houses for Wright over a period of seven years demonstrates that a particular relationship was developed between the contractor and the architect. This is supported by noting that William Adams and Paul F.P. Mueller are the only contractors documented to have built more than one structure for Wright in Chicago. Although he is not mentioned in Wright's autobiography, Adams must have demonstrated a willingness to deal with the unique problems these designs posed, and Wright's hiring him repeatedly reflects his apparent appreciation for Adams' capacity to get the work done satisfactorily.

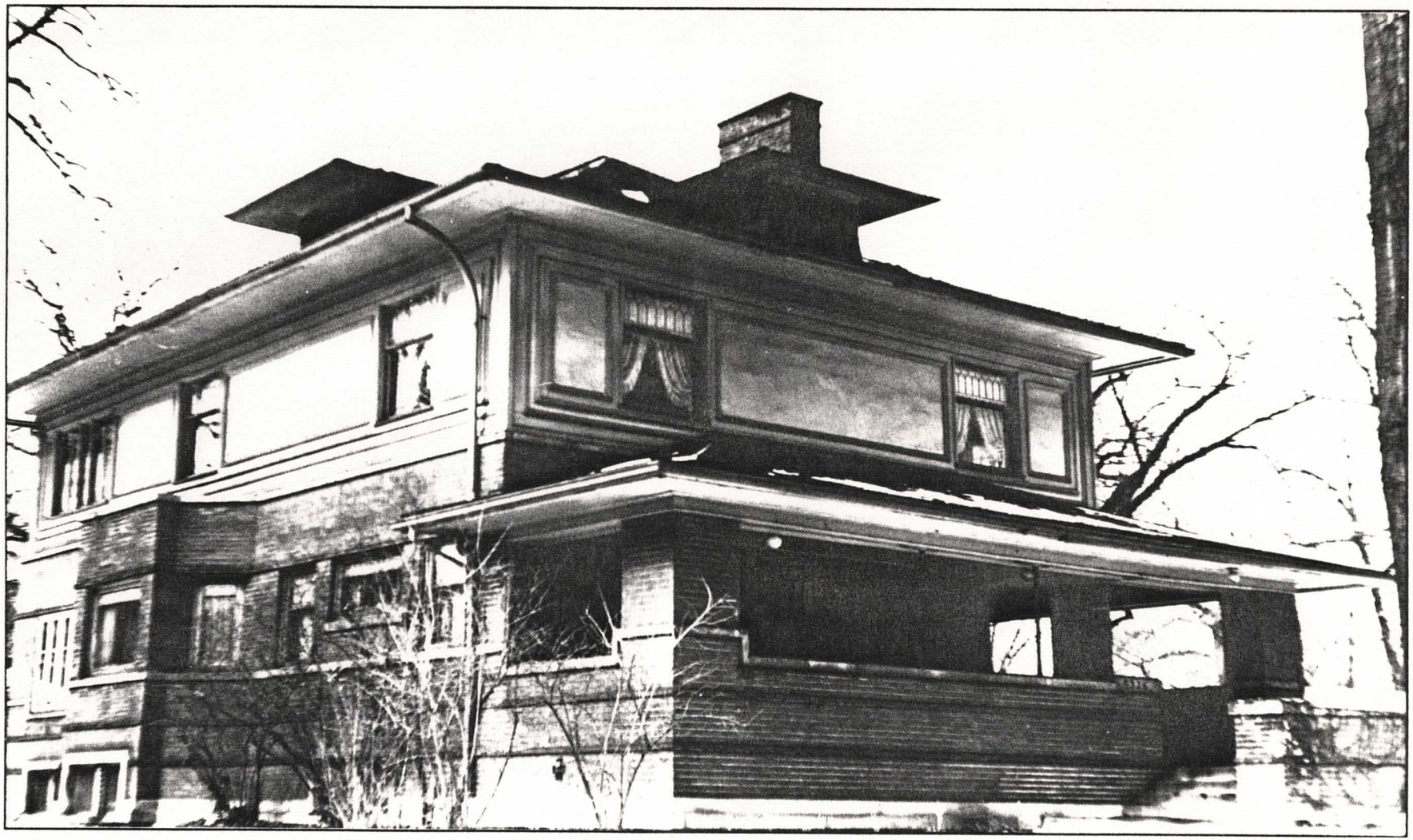
By the end of 1900, less than six years after founding his company, Adams had already built structures designed by a number of the most prominent architects in the area. Given his work for such a variety of designers, Adams could likely have had his choice in selecting an architect for his own home. By commissioning Wright to design his residence, Adams further demonstrated the extent of his appreciation for Wright's designs and the concepts he was attempting to make manifest.

The Jessie and William Adams House

The surviving drawings related to the Jessie and William Adams House in the collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation are dated November, 1900. An entry in the *Construction News* of November 24, 1900, announced that work on this structure was ready to begin:

> Architect Frank Lloyd Wright, 1104 Rookery Building, has awarded the contract to the William Adams Company, 145 LaSalle Street, for the erection of a $6,000 two-story and basement residence on Pleasant Avenue, in Longwood, for Jessie M. Adams. Work will begin at once.

Wright's drawings specify that the design was for "Jessie W. Adams", while the *Construction News* listed the name of the owner as "Jessie M. Adams". A similar entry in the "Building News" section of the *Economist* for November 17, 1900, also lists the owner as "Jessie M. Adams". Given that the maiden name of William Adams' wife was Jessie Mae Browning, that the practice of putting real estate ownership exclusively in the name of one's wife was common at the turn of the century, and that these drawings are certainly related to the structure at 9326 South Pleasant Avenue, it is clear that the notation on the drawings includes an error in the middle initial.



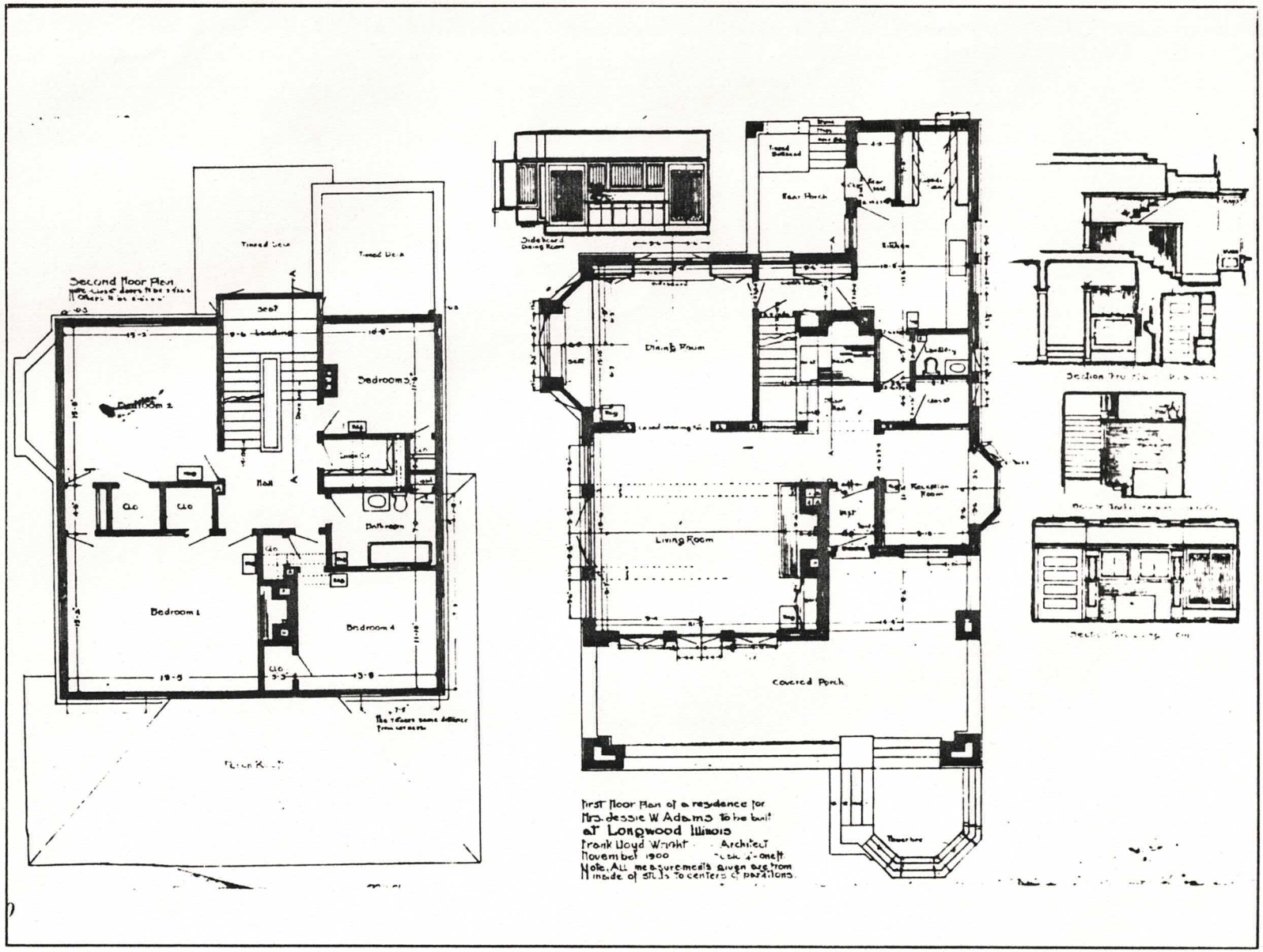
The Jessie and William Adams House, 9326 South Pleasant Avenue, seen from the southeast c.1940. The unconventional relationship between the porch, its approach, and the portal, as well as the horizontality of the design as emphasized by the porch and by the exceptionally deep, flared eaves, are elements of this residence that most clearly prefigure the Prairie Style houses Wright would produce during the next few years. *(Photograph courtesy of the Gilman Lane Collection of the Oak Park Public Library)*

The building permit issued by the City of Chicago for the house that Wright designed for Jessie and William Adams was the first of the new century, dated January 2, 1901, for "a two story brick dwelling to cost $5,000." The discrepancy in the reported amounts to be spent on the building, listed as $5,000 on the city permit and as $6,000 in the journals, was typical of the period. Since the fee the City of Chicago charged for a building permit was based on the estimated cost of the structure, it was to the owner's benefit to give the lowest possible estimate of the cost of the building on the permit. Construction may actually have started between the completion of the drawings in November and the date when the permit was issued; the Lakeside Directory for 1901, compiled in May of that year, already listed William Adams as residing at 9326 Pleasant Avenue.

Located in the Longwood section of the community of Beverly, the Jessie and William Adams House is removed from the congestion of the city center and is stylistically distinct from its immediate neighbors. It sits on the crest of a small hill, stands two and a half stories in height, and is crowned with a hip roof that has a single dormer on its front and side elevations. The house stands on a basement with a concrete foundation, has light brown brick walls trimmed in stone on the first floor and porch, and has a frame second floor coated with stucco and trimmed in wood. The entire design has a pronounced horizontality established by its broad front porch, string courses in brick, copings in stone, trim in wood, and by the exaggerated flare of the roof at the eaves. In its plan and elevation the house has more affinities with the American Four-Square type than it does with the Prairie School designs that would follow in succeeding years, yet this was nonetheless an innovative design at the time it was built, preceding the popular era of the Four-Square by about a decade.

The Jessie and William Adams House is one of many designs that prefigured Wright's later Prairie Style residences, and its front porch, in particular, is an element that demonstrates his experimentation during this period. Essential in establishing the horizontal orientation of the overall design of the facade, the porch roof is supported on two piers that stand nearly 36 feet apart. This exceptional clear span was built without the benefit of intermediate structural supports, and is indicative of Wright's continually testing the limits of materials and technology for dramatic emphasis. Subsequent deflection of this clear span necessitated the installation of unobtrusive minor bracing that has been in place since at least the 1940s.

The function of the porch was also questioned by Wright in the buildings of this period. As an element of Victorian-era design the front porch was typically a combined form, used as an outdoor room and as a passage between the domestic environment and the street. Wright had come to see the porch as an essential element that allowed for the interaction and connection of interior and exterior spaces, with the domestic environment projecting into the surrounding natural setting, and with the light and fresh air of the outside world penetrating into the building as much as practically possible. This theme gave the porch a unique function, to serve as an intermediary space that makes the distinction between interior and exterior



Plan of the first and second floors of the Jessie and William Adams House. The first floor of this plan, like most of Wright's designs after the 1899 Husser House, is more open and less restricted by adherence to any rectilinear limitations. This plan stands in stark contrast to that of the second floor, which is symmetrical except for the stairwell that broke the plane of the wall at the rear. Also of note is the relationship of the living room with the porch, where the windows are indicated as doorways opening between these spaces. *(Drawings of the Jessie and William Adams House are in the archieves of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Reproduced from plate 340 of* Frank Lloyd Wright Monograph, Volume 1, 1887-1901, *by Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, published in Tokyo by A.D.A. Edita, 1986.*

spaces ambiguous, extending the usable living space outward and more completely unifying the building, in use as well as in design and materials, with its natural surroundings.

The plan of the Adams House reveals that Wright was experimenting with the problem of integrating its interior and exterior spaces by manipulating the design of the porch. The entrance to the house is not as simple as one might expect, due to the placement of the porch steps which run parallel with the facade rather than at a right angle to it, and because they are concealed from the street behind a wall, thereby shielding and complicating the approach to the portal. The hidden entrance was a theme with which Wright would continue to experiment throughout his life, creating visually interesting approaches to his Prairie Style residences that served to guarantee a maximum degree of privacy to their owners. In the design of the Adams House, where the porch functioned as an outdoor room and as the passage between the domestic environment and the street, complicating the approach was particularly important if the privacy of this space was to be preserved.

As much as the design isolated the porch from the street, it was also integrated with and as accessible as possible from the interior. This was accomplished by connecting the largest room, the living room in the first floor front, with the porch through two pairs of French doors. Hidden behind the porch wall, these openings appear from the street to be casement windows; from the interior they open onto the porch, effectively extending the room outward and fulfilling Wright's goal of integrating interior and exterior spaces. The Adams House is among the last of Wright's residences to make use of the porch as both an extension of interior space and as an approach to the portal. Working from the experiments represented here, his future designs would separate the functions of the main entrance from those of the porch, limiting access to the porches only from the main living areas or by narrow, partially hidden stairways leading from enclosed areas, such as gardens. The porches of the Susan Lawrence Dana House in Springfield, Illinois, built less than two years after the Adams House, demonstrate this change in Wright's approach to porch design.

The windows of the Jessie and William Adams House represent an instance where the client's wishes may have overridden the intentions of the architect. Writing in *An Autobiography*, Wright either had forgotten or had discounted the use of casement windows on this and a number of his other early residential buildings:

> The windows should sometimes be wrapped around the building corners as inside emphasis of plasticity and to increase the sense of interior space. I fought for outswinging windows because the casement window associated house with the out-of-doors, gave free openings outward. In other words, the so-called casement was not only simple but more human in use and effect. So more natural. If it had not existed I should have invented it. But it was not used at that time in the United States so I lost many clients because I insisted upon it. The client usually wanted the double-hung (the guillotine window) in

use then, although it was neither simple nor human. It was only expedient. I used it once, in the Winslow House, and rejected it forever thereafter.

Although double-hung windows were infrequent elements of Wright's designs, they did appear on a number of his early buildings, including the earlier houses built by the William Adams Company in Chicago, the Isadore Heller House, and the Joseph Husser House. Although a few casement windows were used at the Jessie and William Adams House, notably those in the dining room bay, the majority of the windows are double-hung. One of the vexing problems Wright had with double-hung windows was the division of the field of vision caused by the frame of the sash. In order to minimize this effect he made the upper sash much smaller than the lower, opening the greatest proportion of the lower sash to an unobstructed view and

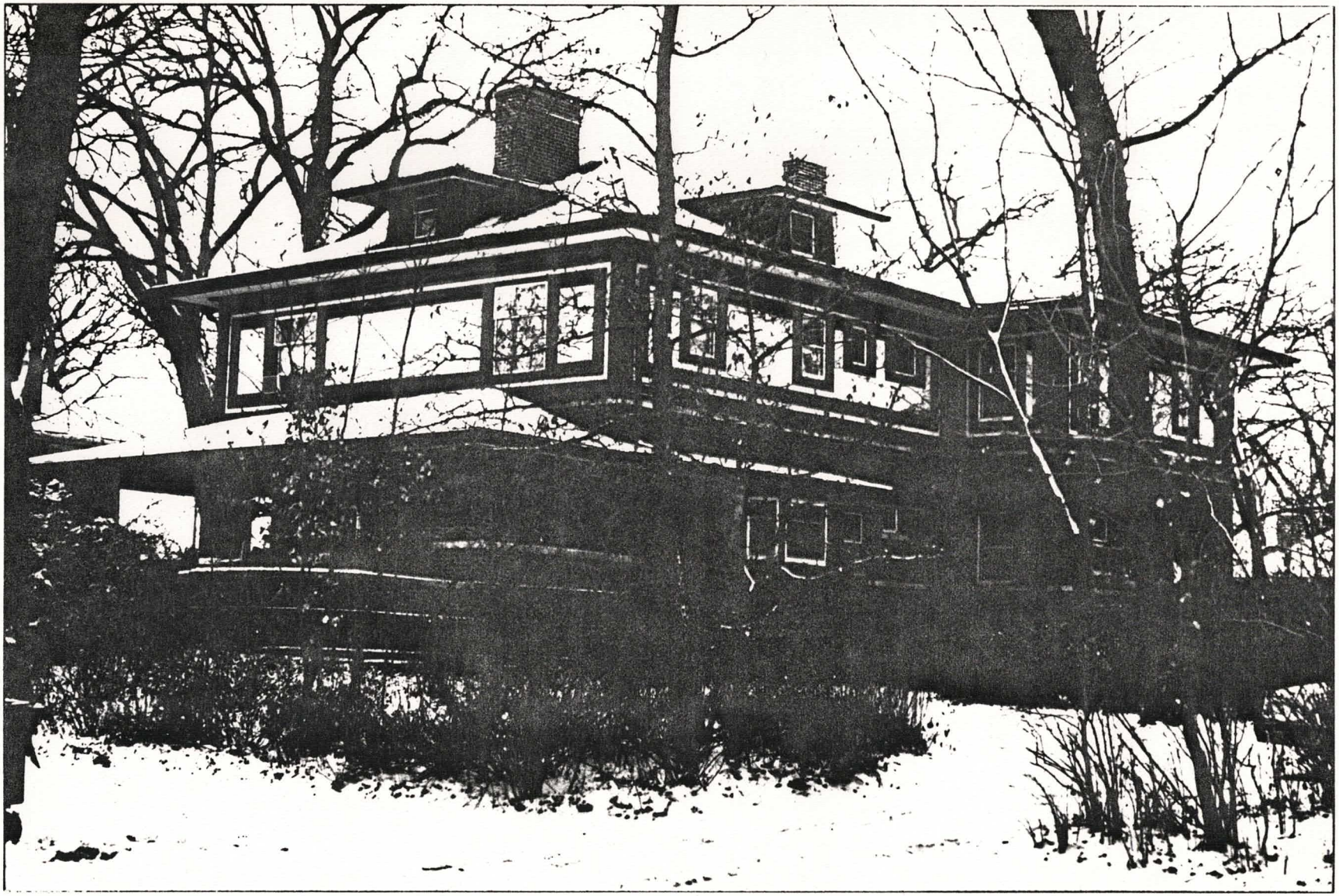
A detailed view of one of the second-floor windows of the Jessie and William Adams House. Unlike many of his later designs, where Wright exclusively used casement windows, most of the windows of the Adams House are double-hung sash. Decorative leaded glass in a pattern derived from plant forms was used in the few casement windows and in the smaller, upper sash of the double-hung windows. The storm windows are recent additions. *(Photograph by Raymond T. Tatum for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks)*

treating the upper sash as if it were a transom, and thereby introducing another horizontal element to the overall design. The casement windows and the upper sash of the double-hung windows of the Adams House are filled with decorative stained glass that is exemplary of Wright's work of this period, rendered in a design that was abstracted from plant forms.

The potential for conflict between Wright and his patrons over design details became legendary, and such might have been the fate of his relationship with William Adams. At least one suburban building and three of Wright's first seven commissions in the City of Chicago, including the Jessie and William Adams House, were built by the William Adams Company. However, of the twelve projects designed by Wright and built in Chicago between 1902 and 1915, among which were six houses, two garages, and four other major projects, including the Midway Gardens, documentation reveals that eleven were constructed by other contractors, with no documentation regarding the contractor for the one remaining. Although the William Adams Company built at least one suburban project for Wright, as demonstrated by the case of the Winslow Stable, it has not been possible in the scope of this inquiry to thoroughly search through the building permit records of the various suburban communities where Wright-designed buildings were built to determine whether or not he erected others. A brief review of the records in the collection of the Oak Park Library, however, has revealed no buildings in that community designed by Wright and constructed by William Adams after 1901.

Speculation as to whether this building was the last of Wright's collaborations with Adams is further supported by the fact that the garage and a major addition to the rear of the Jessie and William Adams House, executed between April and November 1913, were entrusted by Adams to a little-known architect named Robert Hyde. Although these alterations did nothing to change the facade of the house, its side and rear elevations were altered markedly. Previous to the addition, the dimensions of the four sides of the main body of the house were identical. This is made clear by reference to the second floor plan which shows that, except for the stair-well that broke the plane of the wall at the rear, the house was perfectly square. On the south elevation the entire two-story section behind the first floor dining room bay was added, although the addition continued all of the design features of the original fabric. The major changes here were a slight difference in the color of the brick and the disruption of the proportional relationships of the original side elevation. On the north, the addition is much more pronounced, breaking the plane of the wall and extending to the north. Here the addition effectively doubled the width of the kitchen on the first floor and eliminated the deck above it, off of the northwesterly bedroom, and created a new space on the second floor that was nearly four times the size of the original bedroom. The surface treatment of this section also repeated that of the original, however here it is much less successful in concealing its nature as an addition.

Subsequent to the death of its original owners, the Jessie and William Adams House has been owned and occupied by only two other families. With the exception of the 1913 addition,



The Jessie and William Adams House seen from the northeast in 1989. The house sits on a heavily wooded lot and is covered with ivy, which effectively conceals many aspects of its design during most of the year. The two-story section that breaks the plane of the north wall, at the right in this view, is the addition of 1913. *(Photograph by Raymond T. Tatum for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks)*

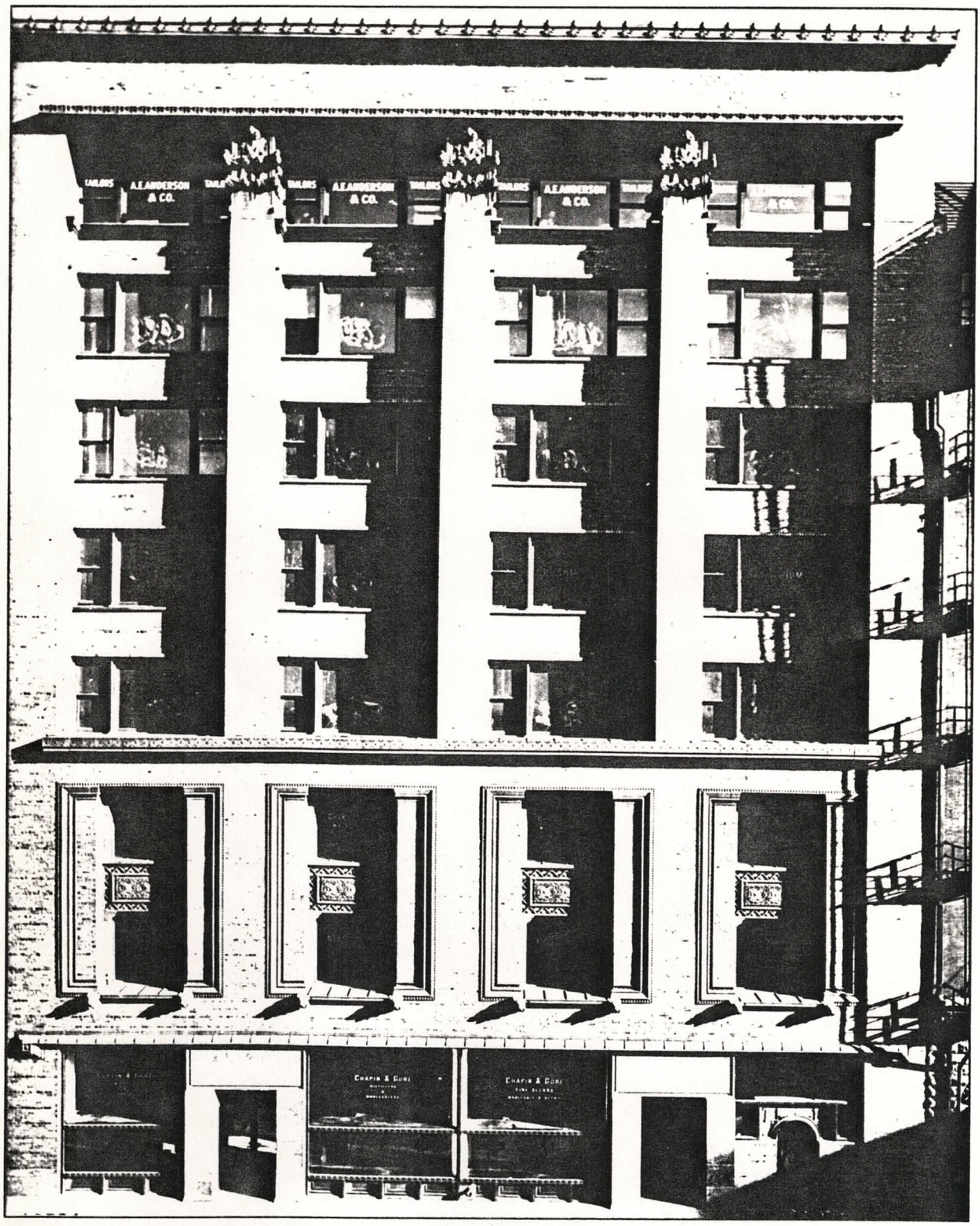
the house retains an exceptionally high degree of integrity and has apparently been well maintained throughout its history.

Adams and Wright in Later Years: A Parting of the Ways

As possibly the last collaboration between William Adams and Frank Lloyd Wright, the Jessie and William Adams House may represent the end of a relationship that had seen the realization of some of Wright's most significant early designs. Given the strains in Wright's relationships with his various contractors and clients and the particular circumstances surrounding this building, which was apparently one of only two times Wright designed for a client who was also a contractor and a previous collaborator, it may not have been possible or desirable for them to continue to work together. The contractor as client would have been in a position to make demands on the designer unlike any other, and would be in a position to make changes to a design while he supervised the work in progress, had he been so bold. The potential for abuses in the relationship would have been great, making this a situation rife with opportunities for disagreement.

In spite of the apparent end of his working relationship with Frank Lloyd Wright, Adams continued to build for other Prairie School architects in the years immediately following the construction of his own house. This is most notably demonstrated through his construction of the Chapin & Gore Building, erected three years after the Adams House from designs by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh Garden. In later years, however, the William Adams Company established a reputation as a specialist in interior renovations for existing commercial buildings. Working particularly on structures in the Loop, these alterations typically included new storefronts, enclosing elevator shafts to meet new building codes, lobby renovations, and additions. With this change in the nature of his work, after 1910 Adams' name is not often associated with the major architects of Chicago.

In addition to its status as a significant design by a preeminent architect, the Jessie and William Adams House was built by and for one of his frequent early collaborators. As such, it is unique in illustrating a relationship between Wright and one of his contractors, a kind of relationship that was often strained by the demands of style, detail, and finance throughout the architect's career. The simple fact that Wright was willing to design a home for Adams reveals a degree of appreciation for his industry and workmanship that the architect did not often confer. Adams' choice of Wright to design his home was also an unusual event, and demonstrated the extent of his respect and admiration for the architect and his ideas. Although it is smaller in scale than the other buildings Adams built for Wright, it nonetheless demonstrates the architect's principles and embodies the working relationship these men enjoyed for many years.



The Chapin & Gore Building, located at 63 East Adams Street, was designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh Garden and erected by the contracting firm founded in 1895 by William Adams. The Chapin & Gore Building was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1982. *(Photographer unknown, view taken c.1905. Courtesy of the City of Chicago Municipal Reference Library)*

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Additional research material used in the preparation of this report is on file at the office of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks and is available to the public.

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The Commission on Chicago Landmarks was established in 1968 by city ordinance, and was given the responsibility of recommending to the City Council that specific landmarks be preserved and protected by law. The ordinance states that the Commission, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, can recommend any area, building, structure, work of art, or other object that has sufficient historical, community, or aesthetic value. Once the City Council acts on the Commission's recommendation and designates a Chicago Landmark, the ordinance provides for the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and perpetuation of that landmark. The Commission assists by carefully reviewing all applications for building permits pertaining to the designated Chicago Landmarks. This insures that any proposed alteration does not detract from the qualities that caused the landmark to be designated.

The Commission makes its recommendations to the City Council only after extensive study. This preliminary summary of information has been prepared by the Commission staff and was submitted to the Commission when it initiated consideration of the historical and architectural qualities of this potential landmark.

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